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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Thirty-sixth session, second part

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Supplement No. 4

Report of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget

on its eighteenth session

(30 October–8 November 1989)

UNITED NATIONS

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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For the recommendations, resolutions, declarations and decisions adopted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, see:

First session: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*, vol. I, *Final Act and Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 64.II.B.11), pp. 18-65;

Second session: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Second Session*, vol. I and Corr.1 and 3 and Add.1 and 2, *Report and Annexes* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.II.D.14), annex I, A, pp. 28-58;

Third session: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Third Session*, vol. I, *Report and Annexes* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.73.II.D.4), annex I, A, pp. 53-114;

Fourth session: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Fourth Session*, vol. I and Corr.1, *Report and Annexes* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.II.D.10), part one, sect. A, pp. 6-43;

Fifth session: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Fifth Session*, vol. I, *Report and Annexes* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.II.D.14), part one, sect. A, pp. 6-50;

Sixth session: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Sixth Session*, vol. I, *Report and Annexes* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.II.D.6), part one, sect. A, pp. 6-40;

Seventh session: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Seventh Session*, vol. I, *Report and Annexes* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.88.II.D.1), part one, sect. A.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The eighteenth session of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 30 October to 8 November 1989.

2. In the course of the session, three plenary meetings were held. This report gives a short account of the proceedings of those meetings.

Opening statements

3. In his opening statement, the Chairman pointed out that the Working Party's task would involve the reaffirmation, definition and sometimes even the setting of UNCTAD's general orientations, objectives and strategies for the future. The importance of this task was further enhanced by the period covered by the Medium-term Plan. However, the effects of important events within and outside UNCTAD - such as UNCTAD VIII - might necessitate a subsequent review of the Plan. The Working Party should therefore be as pragmatic as possible. The positive impact of improving international relations on multilateral negotiations encouraged a certain optimism regarding the outcome of the Working Party.

4. The Director of the Division for Programme Support and Management Services referred to two factors which greatly facilitated his task of introducing the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997 for consideration by the Working Party.

5. The first was the timing of the meeting, immediately after a particularly fruitful Board session which had devoted a great deal of attention to defining the challenges facing UNCTAD in the years to come. The Board had adopted inter alia a declaration on the twenty-fifth anniversary which recalled the roots of UNCTAD in resolution 1995 (XIX) and the evolution of its role under the guidance of successive sessions of the Conferences, and confirmed the validity of the Final Act of UNCTAD VII as a framework for the formulation of specific policy measures. The Board had thus reaffirmed the foundations on which the draft plan was built and enriched the policy context in which the draft plan should be set.

6. The second factor was the new format of the Plan which required narratives also at the level of overall programmes, covering general orientations and objectives, the broad problems being addressed and the strategy to be followed. The rationale for the proposed sub-programmes was thus outlined in the documentation itself and did not need to be repeated.

7. Turning to the implications for UNCTAD of the new structure and format, he recalled that extensive discussions in New York, in the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, ECOSOC and the Assembly had resulted in a consolidation of the Plan through a substantial reduction in the number of major programmes, programmes and sub-programmes and in a new format which would introduce general statements of objectives and of areas of emphasis at the overall programme level. The aim of these changes was to make the Plan more effective as a policy instrument for member States and as a management tool for the secretariat.

8. This had meant for UNCTAD a consolidation of most of its activities under two programmes: Programme 15, on international trade; and Programme 16, on development finance, resource flows and external debt. Some other activities had been subsumed under Programme 17 which dealt with special programmes encompassing various activities under the responsibility of different United Nations entities, including UNCTAD.

9. As indicated in the covering note (TD/B/WP/65) on the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan, the new structure and format, on the whole, had proved to be a suitable basis for the elaboration of the new Plan. In this context, he emphasized the opportunity which the new format provided to highlight linkages among activities, which would in turn help to manage them in a co-ordinated and mutually reinforcing way. This was especially important for UNCTAD, interdependence being such an important part of its mandate and raison d'être. The importance of effective interaction among various aspects of the work of UNCTAD was also a main element of the rationale underlying the recent reorganization of the UNCTAD secretariat and had rightly been emphasized by the Working Party in its review of the current Programme Budget.

10. Concerning the process of adaptation of the Plan, he noted that the Working Party was required, more than two years before the planning period was to start, to work out a plan extending well into the second half of the 1990s; and this at a time of unprecedentedly rapid change, and on the eve of a number of very important events which were bound to have a significant impact on the future course of UNCTAD's work.

11. In UNCTAD itself, there were the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 1990 and UNCTAD VIII in 1991. Also the Special Session of the General Assembly would have been held, a New International Development Strategy for the 1990s adopted and the Uruguay Round concluded before the new planning period. Also, a major conference on environment and development was also scheduled for 1992.

12. The new format and structure of the Plan were helpful in that respect in that they provided for greater flexibility facilitating its adaptation to new developments. Various programme budgets to be prepared during the planning period would continue to be the main instruments for introducing greater specificity. In those circumstances, however, very special care should be exercised to utilize effectively the opportunity for periodic revision and adaptation of the Plan provided for under the existing planning procedures.

13. He then referred to the financial context in which the new Plan had to be set. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in presenting the Plan for the United Nations as a whole, would undoubtedly indicate that his proposals were predicated on the assumption that the financial crisis would be overcome by the time the Plan becomes operational and that, in addition to regular budget resources, appropriate and predictable extra-budgetary resources would be available. In a recent statement to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had indicated that, unless the issue of timely and full payment was confronted head-on, the Organization would continue to be hampered by lack of resources and the concomitant inability to respond rapidly and effectively to new demands. He had appealed for a spirit of consensus leading to a solid programmatic and financial agreement on the scope and content of the work of the Organization.

Chapter I

REVIEW OF THE DRAFT UNCTAD SECTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR 1992-1997 (Agenda item 3)

14. For its consideration of agenda item 3, the Working Party had before it a note by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/WP/65, Add.1, 2 and 3) transmitting the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997.

15. At the 91st meeting, on 3 November 1989, the Working Party agreed upon the text (UNCTAD/PSM/CAS/141-143) reflecting the outcome of the review of the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997 (agenda item 3) carried out by the informal group of the Chairman.

16. At the 92nd (closing) meeting, on 8 November 1989, the Chairman stated that agreement had been reached on draft agreed conclusions on item 3 (TD/B/WP/L.57).

Action by the Working Party

17. At the same meeting, the Working Party adopted the agreed conclusions submitted by the Chairman (TD/B/WP/L.57), whereby the Working Party decided to approve the text (UNCTAD/PSM/CAS/141-143) reflecting the outcome of its review of the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997 for transmission to the appropriate authorities in New York. (For the text of the agreed conclusions, see Annex I below).

Concluding statements on agenda item 3

18. The spokesman for the Group of 77 (Peru) expressed the satisfaction of his Group with regard to the work of the Working Party, which had agreed upon the strategies and objectives of UNCTAD for the 1990s. Events outside and within UNCTAD would have to be taken into consideration in future reviews of the Medium-term Plan.

19. The spokesman for Group D (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) commended the Working Party's industry. He emphasized Group D's adherence to the basic mandate of UNCTAD, particularly as formulated in General Assembly resolution 1995 (XIX) and other resolutions. The revision of the Medium-term Plan was essentially a compromise, and attention should be paid to paragraph 2 of the Working Party's agreed conclusions.

20. The spokesman for Group B (United States of America) expressed his whole-hearted agreement with the views already given by the spokesmen for Group D and the Group of 77. He said that future meetings would have a considerable impact on UNCTAD, making the 1991 review of the Plan as important as the review just completed.

21. The representative of China underlined the enormity of the task undertaken by the Working Party and congratulated its members. The revised Plan would be of paramount importance to the basis of UNCTAD's future work; so too would the 1991 review of the Plan.

22. The Chairman expressed his appreciation of the volume of work successfully accomplished by the Working Party. The document they had produced was a good base for intergovernmental machinery and the UNCTAD secretariat, though future events would no doubt make further revision necessary.

Chapter II

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Opening of the session

23. The eighteenth session of the Working Party was opened on 30 October 1989 by Mr. D. Chubur: (Argentina), Chairman of the Working Party at its seventeenth session.

B. Election of officers (Agenda item 1)

24. At its 90th (opening) meeting, on 30 October 1989, the Working Party elected Mr. K. Tiltsch (German Democratic Republic) to serve as its Chairman and Mr. R.G. de Araujo (Brazil) as its Vice-Chairman-cum-Rapporteur.

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (Agenda item 2)

25. Also at its 90th meeting, the Working Party adopted the provisional agenda which it had approved at its seventeenth session (TD/B/WP/64). The agenda for the eighteenth session read as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Review of the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997
4. Provisional agenda for the nineteenth session of the Working Party
5. Other business
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

26. With regard to the organization of work, after hearing the opening statement by the Director of the Division for Programme Support and Management Services (see introduction above), the Working Party decided to meet as an informal working group to consider the agenda item 3.

(d) Membership and attendance 1/

27. The following States members of UNCTAD, members of the Working Party, 2/ were represented at the session: Argentina; Australia; Bangladesh; Belgium; Brazil; Bulgaria; China; Egypt; German Democratic Republic; India; Japan; Kenya; Norway; Peru; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United Republic of Tanzania; United States of America; Yugoslavia.

28. The following other States members of UNCTAD, not members of the Working Party, were represented at the session: Austria; Bolivia; Cameroon;

Democratic Yemen; Finland; Germany, Federal Republic of; Honduras; Hungary; Indonesia; Ireland; Italy; Mexico; Morocco; Philippines; Poland; Qatar; Syrian Arab Republic; Venezuela.

29. The United Nations Development Programme was represented at the session. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD-GATT was also represented.

(e) Provisional agenda for the nineteenth session of the Working Party (Agenda item 4)

30. At its 92nd (closing) meeting, on 8 November 1989, the Working Party approved the draft provisional agenda for its nineteenth session, submitted by the UNCTAD secretariat in TD/B/WP/L.56. (For the provisional agenda, see Annex II).

31. The Chairman stated that, in discussing this agenda during the informal consultations, it had been agreed that the October 1990 session of the Working Party could be dispensed with. Implications for the periodicity of the secretariat reporting on technical co-operation could be discussed further at the February session.

(f) Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

32. Also at its closing meeting, the Working Party adopted the draft report on its eighteenth session (TD/B/WP/L.55) and authorized the rapporteur to complete the final report as appropriate.

Notes

1/ For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP/INF.22.

2/ The membership of the Working Party at its eighteenth session was: Argentina; Australia; Bangladesh; Belgium; Brazil; Bulgaria; China; Egypt; German Democratic Republic; India; Japan; Kenya; Norway; Peru; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United Republic of Tanzania; United States of America; Yugoslavia (See TD/B/1193, part II, chap. X, para. 565).

Annex I

AGREED CONCLUSIONS ADOPTED BY THE WORKING PARTY
AT ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION

The Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget,

1. Having reviewed carefully the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997,

2. Notes that a number of major events will take place in the forthcoming period, both within UNCTAD and elsewhere which would have implications for UNCTAD sections of the Medium-term Plan and stresses the importance of taking into account the relevant results of these events in the process of revision of the United Nations Medium-term Plan,

3. Decides to approve the text */ reflecting the outcome of its review of the draft UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997 for transmission to the appropriate authorities in New York.

92nd meeting
8 November 1989

Notes

*/ UNCTAD/PSM/CAS/141-143 of 8 November 1989.

Annex II

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY */

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. Review of the technical assistance activities of UNCTAD

4. Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the work of the secretariat on programme evaluation

5. Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD pursuant to paragraph 4 of the agreed conclusions adopted by the Working Party at its ninth session

6. Provisional agenda for the twentieth session of the Working Party

7. Other business

8. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

Notes

*/ Approved by the Working Party at its 92nd (closing) meeting, on 8 November 1989 (cf. para. 29 above).

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